

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Barbara A. Mikulski and Ben Cardin and Reps. Steny Hoyer
Cummings

,
Chris Van Hollen
and
John Sarbanes
(all D-Md.)

today announced Maryland was awarded \$27,186,749 million in competitive grant funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop the state's Insurance Exchange. The Affordable Care Act requires states to have operational Insurance Exchanges – one-stop marketplaces where consumers can choose a private health insurance plan that fits their health needs – by 2014.

“This grant recognizes Maryland's role as an innovation state, and I'm so proud we're at the forefront of putting health care reform in action,” **Senator Mikulski** said. “I fought for health care reform to save and strengthen Medicare, improve the quality of care to save lives and save money, and end the punitive practices of insurance companies. Health care exchanges help meet these goals by helping Maryland families and small businesses afford care and achieve long-term health security.”

“Thanks to this grant under the Affordable Care Act, we're one step closer to our goal of ensuring that health care in America is a right and not a privilege,” said **Senator Cardin**. “I will continue to work to keep Maryland at the front of the line when it comes to resources that will help our state develop an affordable insurance exchange, which will expand access to quality healthcare to thousands of Marylanders.”

“Maryland is a national leader when it comes to the implementation of health reform, and this grant recognizes the important and innovative work our state is doing,” said **Rep. Steny Hoyer** (MD-05). “Health reform put an end to insurance company abuses and discrimination, giving all Marylanders the ability to access quality, affordable health care. Maryland's exchange will facilitate that access, helping individuals, families and small businesses secure affordable insurance.”

"This grant will provide critical funding for the centerpiece of the Affordable Care Act," said **Rep. Cummings**

. "These exchanges will allow all Marylanders to search for a side-by-side comparison of private insurance companies

so that they can protect themselves and their families in the most efficient and effective way possible. It has often been said that the greatest wealth is health. With this grant, Maryland residents will be able to better their lives and provide a strong and healthy future for their children. I commend HHS on assisting our state in this effort."

"Maryland is a national leader on health care reform," said **Rep. Chris Van Hollen**. "Today's grant will enable our state to move full-speed ahead with its health insurance exchange so that individuals and small businesses will be able to comparison shop for affordable and quality health insurance coverage."

"The health care exchanges will allow uninsured individuals and small businesses to benefit from access to the kind of group rates that are now available only to large employers," said **Rep. John Sarbanes**

. "I am pleased that Maryland is among the leaders in implementing health reform and developing an innovative health care exchange."

Maryland will use the federal funds to conduct policy development and detailed planning that will shape the technical and operational infrastructure of the state's Insurance Exchange. This will result in the rapid implementation of the Exchange information technology (IT) platform and an ultimate streamlining of the implementation of the Exchange.

The grant was awarded through the HHS Exchange Establishment grant program, developed to help states continue their work to implement this Insurance Exchange provision of the Affordable Care Act. States can choose when to apply for grant funding based on their needs and planned expenditures, and each state will have multiple opportunities to apply for funding in the years ahead. Maryland's award was a part of \$185 million in grants HHS awarded to 13 states and the District of Columbia to help them build Insurance Exchanges.

Maryland's grant is second in dollar amount only to California, and comes just six months after Maryland won more than \$6 million in an HHS Innovator grant, which is being used to develop

information technology infrastructure needed to implement the state's Insurance Exchange. Last year, Maryland also received a \$1 million Exchange Planning grant from HHS to evaluate best practices for setting up an Insurance Exchange.

Insurance Exchanges will provide individuals and small businesses with a "one-stop shop" to find and compare affordable, quality private health insurance options. With these Exchanges, Americans will no longer be on their own in trying to find comprehensive, affordable health coverage that is right for their needs. Exchanges will bring new transparency to the market so that consumers will be able to compare plans based on price and quality. By increasing competition between insurance companies and allowing individuals and small businesses to band together to purchase insurance, Exchanges will help lower costs.

For more information about the HHS grant program, go to: <http://www.healthcare.gov/news/factsheets/exchanges05232011a.html>